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The consequences of incremental reform and institutional dynamics on the effectiveness of performance management in United Kingdom police services

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Background

The management of performance is an important element in the institutional life of police services in the United Kingdom. From around 1983 there have been a series of government reforms and departmental instructions which have given priority to measuring and controlling the performance of police services. The paper argues that while performance management practices are much in evidence in contemporary police services, the perceptions and views of police officers and civilian staff discussed in this paper should give us pause in concluding that there has been a straightforward triumph of managerialist rationality over operational tradition in the use of policing resources. Evidence is drawn from an extensive study of police officers and civilian staff and their self-reported engagement with performance management systems in three large United Kingdom police services.

Police services in the England and Northern Ireland are required to submit to an external annual performance audit process organised by the HMIC, (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary). Internally police services employ performance management schemes extensively. Performance indicators tend to be concentrated on policing outputs as far as internal management systems are concerned. Output targets given to police officers usually refer to readily recordable activities such as detections in relation to common offences such as robbery, sanction detections which involve 'cautions' issued in relation to low level offences such as possession of cannabis or adult shoplifting, fixed penalty 'tickets' issued for motoring and stop and search operations launched for example to reduce knife crime. At the corporate level police services are held to account by the HMIC for a wider range of activities selected to provide an overview of the efficiency and quality of policing provision. The study examined the internal use of performance management and the extent to which police officers at different ranks had been made aware of, used and been influenced by the performance management systems operating in their own organization. Three problems emerged. Firstly while performance management has taken root in police services at all levels there is clear

¹ While a serving police officer McVicker held a National Police Training Bramshill Fellowship, awarded to collect the evidence which this paper draws on.

evidence that an elite has become established around the expert roles associated with running performance systems, creating a barrier between head quarters and operational levels. An associated issue is the extent to which performance management regulations are used as a resource in police service institutional politics. Secondly it is clear from the research conducted that relatively little communication takes place around evidence collected through police service performance management systems. The potential of performance evidence to be used in formative evaluation is not being realised because lateral discussions do not take place between police officers. Thirdly at the operational level the study collected evidence to suggest there is a certain level of alienation amongst police officers which is caused by the highly directive manner in which they are subjected to performance management practices. This is also manifested in gaming tactics employed by operational police officers. Much of the explanation for these problems lies in the hierarchical structure, cultural practices, habits and rule elements which comprise the institutional basis of police services in the United Kingdom. Heavily influenced by the legal environment in which they operate, adherence to regulations and standard operating procedures are much in evidence in the institutional form that police services have adopted.

Tracing the record of managerialist reforms affecting policing in the United Kingdom, it is argued that a managerialist bias has permeated a wide ranging list of policies which police services have been subject to since as far back as the 1960s. The terms under which performance management was accepted by police services in the United Kingdom are of some considerable interest. It is argued that police services are 'strong institutions' which have successfully assimilated performance management reforms as opposed to being forced to comply with instructions imposed by central government. An announcement by the new Home Secretary Theresa May in a speech to the annual conference of ACPO, to the effect that she was scrapping immediately the performance targets and minimum standards introduced by the previous Labour administration, might have been expected to be welcomed by the chief constables of England's police services. Instead a number immediately went on public record to oppose the abolition of targets because they were 'helpful in fighting crime' as one put it. (BBC, 2009)

Internally police services have clung to an institutional model which has made compliance with the central government performance regime relatively easy to accomplish, while paradoxically at the same time diluting the impact of reforms in respect of attainment of substantive service improvement based on managerialist values. This is an example of the unintended consequences of NPM. (Hood & Peters, 2004) The effectiveness of performance management has been compromised.

Incremental adoption of performance management and the managerialist bias

The current structure of policing in England is based on the 49 police forces which were created by the 1964 Police Act as a consequence of merging smaller forces. At that time structural reform was deemed necessary to keep the police up to date with social changes which amongst many things had led to greater mobility on the part of criminals. There were also efficiency and economy of scale arguments behind the legislation. This act signalled the beginning of a process of managerialist reform. A managerialist bias can be detected in innovations charted by Pollitt & Bouckaert (2009 pp. 51-57) in their timeline of police reform in the United Kingdom. A managerialist direction is implied by an initiative such as the establishment of the Police National Computer (PNC) in 1969, which in centralising record keeping demanded a new level of correspondence with standard administrative practices. A similar pressure was applied by the establishment of the National Reporting Centre (NRC) in 1972. In 1976 a new Police Act established the Police Complaints Board (PCB) which caused police services to improve their record keeping practices in order to provide evidence in cases dealt with by this new body. In 1981 the Greater London Council (GLC) established a Police Committee with a support unit to monitor policing practices. Similar initiatives were taken by elected representatives in a number of London boroughs. The police tightened their command and control systems in anticipation of political pressure being applied on them to justify operational practices. Senior police officers if encouraged to discuss the history of reform in the United Kingdom will inevitably place much significance on the 1984 reforms known as 'PACE'. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 was designed to balance the powers of the police with the rights and freedoms of the general public. The legislation codified police powers to investigate crime and provided safeguards over the exercise of those powers. The PACE reforms while not obviously managerialist in design resulted in the police being required to standardise investigative practices, reducing the opportunity for officers to employ discretion over the tactics employed in engaging with suspects and witnesses. Policing practices were becoming more standardised. In 1985 the Prosecution of Offences Act established a new and independent Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which removed a further element of discretion from police services, also causing them to pay greater attention to how evidence was collected and presented cases against suspects in crimes.

More explicitly managerialist and performance orientated changes were associated with the 1983 Home Office Circular 114, which introduced the then fashionable concept of value for money (VFM). (In England the Home office is the central government department with responsibility for policing). From this point on the police in the United Kingdom have been required to demonstrate that they deal systematically with setting performance objectives and priorities. In 1987 the first 'matrix' of police performance indicators was developed and promoted by the HMIC, the central government police service inspection agency. Around this time individual police services were becoming notably

more interested in managerialist topics such as strategy and performance. In 1990 performance and quality issues were moved to a more central position in police service narratives with a key publication by ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) *Setting the Standards for Policing: Meeting Community Expectations*. Central government kept up the pressure with the Sheehy report in 1993 which advocated performance-related pay (PRP), short-term contracts and the abolition of certain ranks. In 1993 a set of national police performance indicators were produced by the Home Office. The 1994 Police and Magistrates Courts Act had given the Home Secretary a role in determining national key objective which local police authorities, which oversee police services, were instructed to use in performance monitoring activities. National police objectives also began to be set and revised on a regular basis by the Home Office. The new Labour government elected in 1997 continued to promote managerialist reforms. Police services were subject to a series of requirements associated with the Best Value system introduced in 2000. The 1994 Police and Magistrates Courts Act passed by the previous Conservative government required police authorities to produce annual policing plans, which placed performance management in a central position in the process of oversight.

While this is an impressive record of managerialist policy making, it is also the case that much has survived of the police service as an institution with its origins in the Police Act of 1964, even although crime patterns and the list of duties performed by police services have changed considerably. Performance management reforms have been piecemeal neither demanding nor prompting big picture examinations of how police officers are commanded.

Police services seen as institutions

The police in western democracies tend to have certain 'cultural fundamentals' which relate to their position of authority and capacity for coercive force in problematic circumstances. (Herbert, 2006) In more specific terms the origins of British policing lie in initiatives made by Home Secretary Robert Peel in the Metropolitan Police Act 1829. The contemporary shape dates back to 1964 and consequently local police services as institutions have been allowed to grow and establish very strong foundations. In examining the politics of performance in police services in the United Kingdom it is argued that police services need to be seen as institutions whose basic characteristics based on a command and control structure, rigid observation of hierarchy, a bias for top down as against horizontal communications and strong adherence to custom have had a marked influence on the impact made by performance management. Police services and senior police officers in the

United Kingdom give few signs of having seen the imposition of performance management requirements by central government in terms of punishment and penance and may have used associated measurement and control tools as resources for institutional growth.

Institutional theory can be applied to police services as a means of understanding the impact of performance management. Scott, 1995 conceived of institutions as resting on three pillars, which he described in terms of their regulative, normative and cognitive features. It is generally accepted that what Scott called the regulative pillar is particularly strong in the case of police services, meaning in effect that compliance with rules is to the fore in this type of institution. It is in the police officer's self interest to be seen to adhere closely to rules. The need for police services to work within the law and respond consistently to potentially dangerous events ensures that this pillar will be of major significance at all times. The police as an institution developed a regulative pillar that is supported by a rigid hierarchy, a detailed bureaucracy and a strong command and control structure. One important features of this aspect of institutional life is an acceptance on the part of police officers that they will sometimes be conforming to rules which they do not necessarily agree with. Police institutions also rely to a large extent on what Scott called the normative pillar. The normative pillar relies on a certain level of support for formal institutional values and objectives. Common beliefs about the purpose of policing and the values police officers should subscribe to are an important foundation for a stable institution. Values and beliefs will be expressed through a logic of appropriateness, which in this context means police officers playing a particular role know what is expected of them without recourse to much consideration of alternative options. Goals, attitudes and behaviours will correspond to the dominant norms which this institutional pillar is built on. In the case of police services the dominant norms appear to be relatively stable although certainly subject to incremental change such as that implied by performance management reforms. Scott's third pillar is based on the social material used to pull off the cognitive trick that successful institutions employ to further order behaviour. The material in question is based on custom and secures the circumstances whereby 'the way we do things around here' is taken as an institutional given. Police officers are assumed by observers to take on a strong institutional identity and that means adopting informal, non-explicit customs as well as observing rules and norms. (Paoline, 2003) Significantly perhaps the National Police Improvement Authority's (NPIA) instructions and best practice guides to handling policing are commonly referred to as 'doctrine' by senior officers.

Performance management if implemented under certain conditions could have challenged the foundations of police services as institutions. Instead it is argued that the United Kingdom's police services are institutions which have demonstrated a considerable capacity to absorb 'alien' forces.

Incremental policy making which allowed the basic institutional life of police services to endure throughout a long period of performance reform explains why this has been the case.

Study Design

The data referred to in the study has been derived from a study of police officers and civilian staff in head quarters and selected geographic sub divisions in three police services in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, referred to as Police Services A,B &C. In total 70 face to face interviews were conducted during 2005-7, with respondents ranging in rank from Assistant Chief Constables with responsibility for strategic policy and performance to response (patrol) constables at the operational level. The 36 constables in operational roles who were interviewed were the biggest group in the study. Interviews were also conducted with civilian staff mostly located in police service headquarters. The style of these encounters can best be described as 'grand-tour' conversations where respondents were steered towards a small number of key interview destination issues but also encouraged to talk about their experiences and perceptions of performance management in terms which came naturally to them. (Undheim, 2003) Interview transcripts were analysed manually to identify significant patterns in the way performance management was perceived and experienced by subjects.

Key findings

Senior police officers and civilian staff based in head quarters endorse performance management signifying that any possible challenges to the institutional foundations of police services have been successfully reconciled. It was also apparent that the performance management systems employed in the police services examined are not fully understood by the majority of police officers at operational rank in terms of purpose and process. While strong institutions ensure that the majority of officers within this category have a strong commitment to achieving performance targets, their capacity to link targets to strategic policing objectives is very limited. This finding confirmed earlier work, such as the study by Beattie and Cockcroft (2006: 41), who concluded that police officers working under performance regimes needed to be consulted more during the development of performance measures. A lack of imperative on the part senior officers to communicate with operational officers over the thinking behind performance management schemes was a marked feature of institutional life in the police services examined. Response officers are in effect excluded from the development of performance target setting. While this is no surprise given the history of the police in the United Kingdom as an institution with a traditional reliance on a strong hierarchy, there are problems in accepting the effectiveness of the command and control model as a means of

improving performance. Institutional dynamics identified in the study mean that the benefits associated with the ability to emphatically impose targets on response officers, need to be measured against certain unintended behaviours and impacts. For example the study confirmed that police services are ideal institutional fields for developing gaming tactics to undermine top down performance management systems. The command and control divide between response constable and 'management' ranks, mean that officers at ground level are in a position to 'manoeuvre around, outwit, or nullify the moves of headquarters decision makers' (Reuss-Ianni and Ianni 1983: p. 259). The institutional basis of police services also provides a perfect opportunity for higher ranks or staff in head quarters to develop a monopoly over the understanding of the system of performance management employed. The incremental changes to the performance management of police services in the United Kingdom have been made, of course reinforces the exclusive position of senior staff in this respect. This is the iron rule of oligarchy at work and was much evident in the responses of police officers interviewed when asked to reflect on their experiences of performance management. Put simply a working knowledge of performance management becomes a powerful institutional resource, with a result that there is risk of creating disincentives to enter into action that encourages shared ownership of strategic performance management targets. The lurking danger of an alienated rank and file of response officers is quite apparent in the responses presented below.

Results and analysis

Institutional assimilation of performance management

Interviews sought to give respondents the opportunity to register approval, disapproval and dissent in respect of performance management. The institutional assimilation of performance management was much evident but took different forms when we examined the 'terms of endorsement'. The data presented below in the form of extracts from interview transcripts has been organised under three categories – 'endorsement', 'communications' and 'alienation'.

Endorsement

Interviews recorded many instances of respondents' providing low key endorsement of performance management arrangements. For example a subject might make clear their support for 'steady as you go' development of the current system. Respondents might signal their endorsement by making reference to a process element of performance management which had been improved. Less frequently interviews led to subjects attempting to explain the management –outcome link. The

quotes provided below give a sense of how an assimilation of performance management into policing values has strengthened the normative institutional pillar.

'Our process is continually improving from a strategic perspective..... Feedback is provided on a monthly basis to Commanders'. Mr. 'P' HQ Police Service 1,

Chief Superintendent 'H', HQ Police Service 2, stated:

'It points Commanders in the right direction. I mean if you analyse your performance and you analyse your problems you're going to see first of all where your problems are.....but we analyse our performance to see where we're not performing....it points you in the right direction and it's absolutely necessary that you do that'.

Respondents at HQ level were generally keen to support the performance management systems in place as might be anticipated. In relation to the current performance objectives established within Police Service 3, Mrs. 'M' stated:

I find them good. I find that people can understand what it is we're trying to achieve. I find that during a period of immense change they focus the mind on what we're trying to do'.

One respondent expressed endorsement for normative values in distinctly economic terms: stated:

'Well definitely because that's what I said from the word go....the way to encourage people to perform is to hit them where it hurts and that's in the back pocket where the wallet is. Those who don't perform well, they don't get special priority payments or competency payments.....but I think to have a competent and accountable service the message has got to be drilled right the way down to your Constables that they too are accountable....It's not a job for life and that you will be scrutinised....'. Inspector 'F' HQ Police Service 1,

Several respondents at senior levels claimed satisfaction with the refinement of performance management systems

'Well I think we've tipped it round, it was crime followed by crime types, reductions, followed by confidence and satisfaction and it's now the other way up really'. Superintendent 'K' HQ Police Service 1,

Chief Superintendent 'C' Division Police Service 3 stated:

'We're moving away from the slavish adherence to numerical targets and having to achieve all of them but not necessarily surpass any of them, we're moving away from that to the balanced score card which gives you some softer indicators to look at as well....'.

HQ staff tended to be the most enthusiastic supporters of the normative values or corporate rational for performance management. Amongst this group criticism was particularly muted tending to take the form of an expression of support for the adoption of a particular technological innovation:

'I think if a specific model was applied to the current process, for example the EFQM, it might give the system more structure and order.....'. Mr. 'R' HQ Police Service 1,

Concerning the improvement of the current objectives operating within Inspector 'H' HQ Police Service 3, stated:

'I think our current systems and processes are fine right now, but I do feel that there needs to be some flexibility with it. Sometimes there seems to be too much inflexibility....'.

Much less frequently respondents would attempt to explain a performance action –outcome link.

..... We'll do an analysis for Commanders on certain areas and crimes and this will help direct their resources to deal with those issues.....'. Mr. 'P' HQ Police Service 1,

Interviews also attempted to discover whether the corporate legitimacy of performance management was underpinned by institutional practices that included involvement in analysing data, respondents were encouraged to discuss their own personal experience of reviewing and drawing conclusions from such material.

Mr. 'R' HQ Police Service 1 stated that:

'We pretty much analyse everything that's in the performance framework.....and if you were talking to our Chief Officers they'd say the volume quality of analysis we do is appropriate. You can always do better but I think we are satisfied at this stage in our development as to what we're doing.....'.

Superintendent 'K' HQ Police Service 1 stated that:

'..... as a Neighbourhood Inspector I used to analyse my crime daily as to what was being committed in the area I was responsible for So do I perform an analysis? The answer is yes. When I used to run the area inspections I didn't personally analyse anything but I caused

it to be analysed..... Really you should be there making decisions on what the analyst is advising you rather than actually doing the analysis yourself....’.

Superintendent ‘L’ HQ Police Service 1 stated:

‘We do an analysis, for example personal indicators of police officers to see if people were working and what they were working on and whether it was linked to their PDR system.....we also interrogate the systems for the quality of information to try and identify where the crime hot spots are...’.

Superintendent ‘G’ HQ Police Service 2 stated:

‘Personally I don’t do the analysis...the analysis is carried out by our analysts within police headquarters’.

At Divisional level it was possible to give respondents the opportunity to discuss how their command directions were influenced by performance data:

Chief Superintendent ‘L’ Division Police Service 1 stated:

‘The analysis I get will tell me how many burglaries have taken place and then really it comes to the tasking and co-ordinating meeting when the burglaries will be discussed..... from this I can target my resources...the Intelligence Unit provide the data that says what we’re going to target. They do a hot spot analysis....I can get this data when I need it’.

Chief Inspector ‘F’ Division Police Service 1, stated:

‘Well what it does in terms of the violent crime alone, it enables me to put in place operations or to move resources where necessary in order to deal with any of the issues.....So again that analysis of that picture enables us to decide on what our responses and what our plans are going to be, and this will have a huge impact in terms of our performance in reducing crime in the area’.

There was also a certain level of evidence collected in all three police services that performance data is collected as an end in itself rather than as the evidence base for decision making. Chief Superintendent ‘C’ Division Police Service 3 stated:

‘....There have to be immense benefits from monitoring and recording performance if we are going to do something about it. If we’re just going to do it for the sake of doing it and leaving

it lying on a shelf then what was the justification of spending the time and effort....the Police Service in the UK leaves that information lying unanalysed....performance management information exists and it's there to benefit the organisation. My research suggests it's not used as effectively or proactively as it could be....'.

Greater understanding of the institutional assimilation of performance management can be gained through examining some of the doubting and dissenting voices recorded in interviews. It becomes quite clear that respondents can tolerate a range of perceived deficiencies with the performance management systems.

'We've put quality at the top and the reality to that is that we haven't because on the principle that what gets measured gets done, we don't measure quality to the same degree or with the same rigour that we measure quantity and for that reason people focused on quantity and careers are won and lost on what the burglary figures say and what the detection rate is....it's the numbers which are career critical to people'. Superintendent 'K' HQ Police Service 1,

Chief Inspector 'F' Division Police service 1, stated:

'I think that what we haven't got right is that balance between what the Government want and what the public want.... We need to move away from these corporate objectives, to move them all down to local objectives because at the end of the day that's what the public want us to do, that's what we've shown....and for me that's the way forward'.

The above comments could be accepted as indications as to where the performance management system could be refined and developed, which suggests that respondents were endorsing associated rules and values. There were also much more obvious examples of institutional compliance with systems that are perceived as 'wrong'. For example Inspector 'B' Division Police Service 2, admitted that performance metrics were not something he took notice of in his role running a response team:

'I have little understanding of them to be honest, I have to be honest and say my personnel look to me as a leader of a Response Team, I'm not concentrating on these, they're not uppermost in my mind which maybe they should be but they're not.....'.

A small number of senior officers were prepared to offer criticism of the performance management regime based on what they saw as inappropriate interference over operational control.

Police Service 1, Chief Inspector 'F' stated:

'Our objectives are influenced by the people at the top which I'll accept is how it should be, however, the extent to which that happens is wrong. For instance we've had our strategic objectives, violence, robbery and vehicle crime. Well then we got the new Chief in who said the number one strategic objective is to reduce anti social behaviour and has brought in key themes for us to look at month by month....that would probably be quite right for us to do that because anti-social behaviour, whereas it's the public's number one priority, it's never been our number one priority until he's come along'.

Police Service 3, Inspector 'C' stated:

'I want to be told by my bosses if my shift isn't performing to the level it should be but I don't want him going to my troops and telling them that they are not performing. I'm the one that would be saying to them about their performance. I wouldn't be happy with the information being published as that could create league tables..... We had a whole service initiative on car crime on burglary, violent crime.... Now I can understand why we did that but likewise I was aware of a number of areas who said, Why are we having an objective, a common strategic objective for example on car crime when car crime is not an issue for us?.....Everywhere has problems with drugs unfortunately but some places aren't as badly affected as others and they were saying my problem is car crime, Why are you forcing me to deal with drugs offences when it's not an issue?

This suggests that the respondent believes performance management as operated interferes with effective command and control, which amounts to a weakening of the regulative pillar. It was clear from comments made by a number of senior officers that a degree of resentment existed concerning the constant (perceived) adoption and rejection of performance management technologies. A head quarters based elite allowed to indulge itself in innovation existed at least in the minds of a significant number of respondents.

'Another fancy scheme that really does not have an impact on the officers on the street....'.

Chief Inspector 'A' Division Police Service 3

'I'm not so sure about introducing another model in the service. I hear rumours about this and the officers don't seem to be that keen on another process that is viewed as being a hindrance

to providing a service... they look at it as Big Brother is watching.....' Inspector 'P' Division
Police service 3

In spite of misgivings expressed by some respondents, they were still in essence responding to performance management within the terms defined by the institutional pillars. The levels of knowledge and engagement demonstrated by certain staff demonstrated that an elite position had been formed around the specialist knowledge required to operate performance management systems.

Communicating over performance

The institutional assimilation of performance management has taken place on the basis of existing structure and culture and has ensured that performance management has been a command directed exercise from its inception in the 1980s. Lower ranks (police constables and sergeants) are not given an opportunity to take part in anything resembling a formative evidence referenced process of reviewing performance data and identifying ways to deal with problems that emerge. The tension between control and formative uses of performance data is captured in this comment by a senior officer who was acknowledging the extent to which performance analysis was a strictly head quarters exercise closed affair.

'So managers need to start and interrogate and be intrusive in that respect, and it's not about trying to catch people out, it's about trying to make people learn and get that message down and communicate, so that we all know when we come on duty every day what is our purpose for being here'. Chief Superintendent 'H' HQ Police Service 2,

The respondent clearly wished to legitimise performance management through something that can be described as formative data assessment, but did not see this as something currently being achieved. Other respondents were also quick to identify the implementation gap between head quarters level work on performance management and the operational (Basic Command Unit) units.

Superintendent 'L' HQ Police Service 1, discussing Police Service performance targets stated:

'My big problem with it is that I think there needs to be a great deal more co-ordination of it in the sense that they are expecting an awful lot from BCUs..... when you take into consideration the agendas that the Government are driving now I don't think you can actually argue with the correctness of any of them as objectives but I think I would just refer back to what I've just said that how they are then implemented, how they're measured and how they are managed

to ensure that we're actually maintaining performance and deliver them. That's the crucial thing for me.....'.

Mr. 'G' HQ Police Service 3, stated:

'It is my firm belief that our existing systems are ok but I think our Divisions do need some assistance with implementing and measuring their objectives. Over the next few years I think we will make significant progress in this area....'.

More typically head quarters based respondents did not acknowledge that a problem existed over the involvement of operational police officers in the performance management system For example Inspector 'H' HQ Police Service 3, stated:

'I can only speak for Commanders who get that information and I think that they provide the feedback to their personnel....'.

In the same headquarters group within Police Service 3 HQ Inspector 'C' stated:

'I provide feedback mostly to senior officers...feedback is provided to junior officers on a daily basis...I think it's very important that the officers are aware of how well we're doing...'.

The lack of involvement of operational officers in discussions of performance was mentioned by a high number of respondents. Inspector 'B' Division Police Service 2, stated:

'Maybe make them more specific I suppose, rather than having these cover all strategic objectives make them more specific to the officers as a team when they're working on the ground. I think the officers on the ground should be involved more, give them more responsibility for them.....'.

Police Service 2, Inspector 'S' reiterated the views of Inspector 'B', highlighting the necessity for more focus towards the police officers on the ground and added:

'It would sense to make them more specific for those out on the ground. I think those at grass roots level feel that they are out on their own and aren't consulted about what really impacts on them.....'.

Inspector 'P' HQ Police Service 3, stated:

'I think it would be better if the officers on the ground delivering the service were more involved with them. This might give officers a greater insight into the overall issue of strategic objectives.....'.

The response of operational police officers to prompts to discuss the extent of any conferring they were involved in over performance issues at were consistent, indicating that this was an extremely unusual event.

Constable 'D' Operations Police service 2 was typically clear:

'No...I don't take any role in the analysis of data..'

Constable 'C' operations Police Service 2 stated;

'I'm not involved in any analysis...'

To some extent the lack of discussion about performance was accepted by some respondents.

'I'm sure that it is useful...but to be honest I have enough to do. If someone took the time with me to explain it all maybe I could see what it is all about...'. Constable 'D' Operations Police Service 2,

Constable 'M' Operations Police Service 2 stated:

'If I need to find out information I can, but if I was up to speed about the whole thing and all this performance stuff, I might know more about it....'

The few exceptions where respondents were able to recall being regularly engaged in conversations about performance data indicated approval and support for such efforts.

'So he'll come in and he'll update us and say right we need three sanction detections this month and we'll be OK then and we know if we're on late shift that weekend all we need to do is get three sanction detections and our boss will be happy then. So it is a good way of measuring things I think'. Constable 'J' Operations Police Service 1

'The Sergeant provides us with feedback on a daily basis on how we're doing. He'll let us know what the good points are and what the bad ones are...'. Constable 'G' Operations Police Service 3,

Alienation

When we quantified the reactions of all operational officers (sergeants and constables) of the 36 respondents in this category, 29 felt apathetic towards the performance management process. The excessive administrative burden placed on police officers on the ground by performance management was an issue raised by 22 of the 36 respondents in this category. The conclusion that compliance with performance management requirements issued by central government can be accomplished without reference to an operational level which endorses associated values suggests heavy reliance on the regulative and cognitive institutional pillars with normative support rather compromised.

Front-line police constables had little opportunity to make an input into the strategic basis of performance management. The strong regulative and cognitive pillars evident in police services do insure compliance with the performance management schemes in operation. The views expressed by the respondent below indicate they can handle perceived problems with performance management systems because they are part of a strong institution.

To a certain extent the evidence collected suggested that the strong regulative pillar holding up the police service as an institution encourages an acceptance by front-line operational police officers that they have their place and senior officers have theirs and consequently there is no need for them to be engaged over the levels of performance being achieved:

'To be honest, I do my job and focus on what has to be done. Many cops really don't see how this helps them deliver the service. They go from call to call and if they have any spare time they're doing paperwork.....'. Sergeant 'R' Operations Police Service 1

Constable 'B' Operations Police Service 3, stated:

'At the base level it doesn't mean much to a uniform police officer. We've got several objectives to deal with, doing the calls and 9 times out of 10 time permitting you can do that. There's very little spare time to think about other objectives. They'll say right I want more searches done, more weapons searches, drugs searches maybe in your down time. What little down time you do have you've obviously got to try and get it done but other than that the actual figures side of things in a base level don't mean a lot to me...'.

It was clear however that most operational officers had misgivings about performance management systems which were in use.

'Probably from my point of view I think that there should be more input from those officers who are actually on the ground, who are to my mind performing the objectives or going a long way towards performing the objectives. I think sometimes rules are set down for us to follow, for good motivation, however, they don't maybe look at the bigger picture and maybe don't understand what is actually happening on the ground. Does this really have an impact on me? I'm a neighbourhood officer and I along with other officers don't feel that we're all that involved. That is something for the bosses to look at.....'. Constable 'M' Operations Police Service 2

The mild questioning of the type represented in the comment above were not representative of the responses made by police constables in operational roles and looking at responses as a whole, the lack of conferment over performance management purpose, process and analysis does appear to creating a sense of alienation:

Concerning the provision of feedback within Constable 'C' Operations Police Service 2, stated:

'No, I don't get feedback and don't provide any... Well if there was something specific, a specific incident I would go out of my way to provide feedback and try and update but I often find there again people are either in an office with other people and they're milling about..... I often found a lack of interest'.

Concerning the provision of feedback within Constable 'I' Operations Police Service 3, made specific reference to relations with superiors in management positions and stated:

'It could be improved by providing us with feedback on what we are doing and why we do it. A lot of cops out there really don't know why we do what we do....I think management could do more to help with that'.

Constable 'G' Operations Police Service 2 raised the issue of specific feedback from those in senior management positions, and went on to state:

'I do my job and I have things to deal with...those in management really need to tell us what this is about because we feel we are kept in the dark concerning these performance things....'

Sergeant 'H' Operations Police Service 2 stated:

'....you've also got to understand the constraints that they're (Response police officers) put under and you shouldn't just be looking at specifics.. you should be looking at the overall

performance within a team because there can be officers who are good at some things and officers who are good at other things....there has to be a balance across the whole section....It's always been a controversial thing....'.

Constable 'F' Operations Police Service 3, stated:

'To me they're just purely like a management tool rather than affecting the day-to-day policing of "X" and although there are performance indicators and things in accounting I still have to argue in my head what is the connection? What effect do they have because your time is so precious on the street, does the strategy make any difference to the way you go about your business and I still say, I don't know if it makes any difference....'.

Negative comments could be dismissed as manifestations of internal police service politics for instance expressions of resentment by response teams concerning the comfortable positions occupied by head quarters staff, police officers in specialist units or community policing roles. Examples could be found in the transcripts of interviews.

Constable 'M' Operations Police service 2 stated:

'I am all for performance, but it has to be fair to all. Sometimes we're so busy here and you never get your head lifted. The authorities (senior management) need to know that we just can't tick all the boxes because you could be dealing with something which could take all day....'.

Sergeant 'G' Operations Police Service 3 stated:

'....I think the system must recognise that police officers doing response duties are under pressure to meet targets and I don't think management really know that....'.

Superintendent 'G' Division Police Service 2 pointed out that performance management was overly focused on response teams. ;

'.....So there are certain parts of the service that have huge areas of scrutiny and accountability and there are other parts of the service that don't. So there's a cultural issues round there'

Sometimes resentment was mixed up with nostalgia for earlier years, Constable 'B' Operations Police Service 1, stated:

'With having performance indicators it can be a good thing or a bad thing. When I joined we never actually had performance indicators and basically supervisors knew if you were working.... now you've got to get so many ticks in boxes'.

Constable 'S' Operations Police Service 2, stated:

'.....From what I see on a day-to-day basis figures. Figures seem to be all that matter. We've got away from the sort of quality of service in that everything is driven now by the numbers and I'm not sure if there is a way that that can be improved. I know we have to be accountable for what we do and where our budget goes or whatever but at times I'm not convinced that that we're offering the public the best service because of the way the thing is, because the way the system's operating at the minute'

Constable 'J' Operations Police Service 1, went on to say:

'I think we have a good system and that we are measured on our performance but I think there's too much emphasis put on it in that if I didn't arrest for one month it would be why haven't you? Well be I've been doing this and that and I've been doing other things, I've got crimes to investigate, traffic files to do, but you've not arrested so and at the end of the day if you haven't done something they don't see what you have done, they see what you haven't done and you don't get, in my opinion you don't get praise for what you do well you just get shouted at basically for what you've not done that month'.

Sergeant 'G' Operations Police Service 2 was more direct:

'From my own perspective I do think that there is a bit of a hole between the lower ranks and higher ranks. I don't think there's enough communication between all the ranks.... sometimes though the things aren't really explained to us and we just feel that we're cannon fodder. We're being asked to do things we don't know why. I mean we'll follow orders but sometimes it's nice to be informed as to why you're actually doing what you're doing'.

Sergeant 'B' Operations Police Service 2, stated:

'Personally and in my experience here in this area I think at times our targets are unrealistic. I think in many respects they're unachievable. I don't understand how they arrive at the percentages that they arrive at. We'll reduce burglary by 4%. Why not say we'll try and reduce burglary? Last year we've had 500 burglaries, this year we'll try and reduce that. How do you come up with a percentage we'll try and reduce it by 4% or 6% or whatever? I think at times we're making a rod actually to beat ourselves with because ultimately at the end of the

year if there's been an increase we've failed then the whole vicious cycle basically goes around again...I suppose management could tell us why this is done because we're basically in the dark over this...'

Interviews often touched the subject of 'gaming', the exploitation of system flaws to misrepresent performance, although no respondent was prepared to admit they took part in such practices.

Inspector 'Y', Division Police Service 1 stated:

'Well there are because there could be integrity issues as in what way that people cook the books and present the figures.....'

When asked how this could be eradicated, the Inspector elaborated on this issue and added:

By very rigorous, and I hate the phrase, very rigorous dip sampling of the crime figures.....'

The inevitability of gaming within the police institution as currently formed seemed inevitable to a number of respondents.

'The harsh reality is that performance indicators are ticks in boxes, invariably you get a form with a series of boxes in it that you are required to tick. It serves no purpose. It's a false measuring tool. People, human nature as such, people will give you what you think you want. People will give you what they expect you to want. So if you ask someone to evaluate their behaviour the reality is that people will give you a figure or they will complete forms at the end of their shift rather than do the task'. Constable 'N' Operations Police Service 3

Inspector 'F' Division Police Service 1 was concerned about the damage caused to the reputation of the police

'....Because of the edict what gets measured gets done and having listened to the news this morning about the Police Federation Conference at Blackpool where a Greater Manchester Police officer referred to their quota is to attain four arrests every month. I think that that can be divisive....the members of the public that they are in fact arresting, their perception is you're only doing this because you've got to get four a month...I do think there's got to be measurement of individual officers but I'm not into quotas'

The Inspector also confirmed that gaming was sometimes a question of finding the optimal compromise position on performance claims.

'Integrity issues, take robbery for example this crime can be reclassified so that it looks better than it is. But the head of the area makes the figures look better than they are that will have an impact on your resources, because if you don't appear to have a problem then you won't get the resources to address the problem that you've actually got....'.

Constable 'F' Operations Police Service 3 suspected that manipulation of data was a endemic

'I don't think they are very accurate, I think we create a picture because you'll get a cop in the street who'll give a return to his Sergeant who'll maybe look at them all, that's not right there, one, two, three, four, x, y, z and by the time it gets up to the top floor where they are going to do something with these numbers the figures have been manipulated.. I think the returns are almost wrong'.

Conclusions

The key to understanding the impact made by performance management reforms on police services in the United Kingdom is the process of 'assimilation'. Rather than feeling compelled to resist managerialist encroachment by successive United Kingdom governments, police services when viewed as institutions have been powerful enough to achieve a 'sinicization' effect. Sinicization theory refers to the historical process whereby the triumphant foreign invaders of China whether Manchu, Mongols, Tartars (and much later the ideological 'invaders' behind communism) became assimilated within an enduring Chinese identity. (Wright, 1957). The police seem to have a similarly enduring institutional character in the absence of fundamental reform over the last 45 years in the United Kingdom. This is likely to continue in the near to middle future, since performance management has provided a boom in regulative work and procedure building within police services. Performance management expressed in target setting form provides good material for command and control driven reward and punishment. While a compliance effectiveness of has been achieved in relation to performance management it is also true that institutions need to maintain and replenish their foundational pillars. The evidence presented above suggests that this may be problematic if performance management is undermining the endorsement of the shared normative values which police services rely on and perhaps encouraging cognitive customs which include gaming. The levels of alienation uncovered in operational ranks may cause a certain discomfort about the state of the police service as an institution.

If performance management is to have a rationalising impact on the conduct of policing, consistent with achievements in certain other public services such as healthcare, where a strong evidence base now exists for allocating and using resources and crucially establishing common understandings

between staff about interventions that work, then government in the United Kingdom needs to specify how it is implemented. This almost inevitably means examining the institutional basis of police services and in particular the reliance on top down command and communications which largely exclude operational police officers from reflecting and learning about their role in achieving performance objectives.

The Home Office consultation paper *Policing in the 21st century* was described by the Home Secretary as the 'most radical reform of policing for 50 years'. While offering up the prospect of elected police commissioners, in most respects however, it offers much weaker guidance on how the institutional structure of England's police services will be reformed than the Flanagan Report of 2008, which did tackle the issue of institutional reform to some extent, at least in the sense of recognising that there are too many expensive and hard to adapt sworn police officers in post. The politics of austerity where cuts are being made at unprecedented levels are likely to put pressure on police-government relations, but are unlikely to encourage long term policy ambitions regarding the institutional reform of policing in the United Kingdom.

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